



More than six dozen female middle schoolers visited INL to learn about career options in science and engineering at the annual My Amazing Future event organized by Idaho Women in Nuclear.

## Female scientists, engineers open students' eyes to career options

By Kortny Rolston, *INL Communications & Governmental Affairs*

Eight hours was enough to change Amber Romriell's mind about her future.

When the eighth-grader arrived at the March 2 "My Amazing Future" event, she wanted to be a dental hygienist. By the end of the daylong, hands-on science workshop hosted by Idaho National Laboratory, Romriell was enthralled with engineering.

She had visited a robotics lab, learned how 3-D technology is changing research and even used nuclear forensics to find clues at a mock crime scene.

"All of this engineering stuff is really cool," the Eagle Rock Junior High School student said. "It's really changing my mind about what I want to do. I like doing things with my hands and I've learned a lot about what kind of careers are out there."

Romriell was one of 76 female students from Idaho Falls and Twin Falls who attended the annual event, which is organized by [Idaho Women in Nuclear](#) (IWIN), [Portage, Inc.](#), the [American Society of Mechanical Engineers](#) and several other groups support the event.

Experiences like Romriell's are why IWIN members say they launched "My Amazing Future" six years ago. The members, many of whom work at INL, wanted female students with an aptitude for science and/or math to be exposed to the wide array of career options available and to encourage them to continue studying math and science.

"At the junior high age, studies show only 4.5 percent of girls consider careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)," said Reva Nickelson, an INL manager and an event organizer. "There are a number of women who are engineers and scientists and we want these girls to understand that they can do it. They can pursue careers in STEM areas."



That message was clear to Andee Cervantes, a senior from Twin Falls, who attended for a second year. She credits "My Amazing Future" and the female professionals at the event for her plans to pursue an engineering degree.

Cervantes said the first year piqued her interest and her goal this time around was to better understand the different engineering disciplines.

"I really wanted to talk to (the female presenters) to figure out what kind of engineering I want to study," she said. "I like understanding how things work so I think mechanical engineering would be good."

Meeting female scientists and engineers also was a highlight for Romriell.

"I didn't expect so many women would be engineers and scientists," she said. "It's really cool."

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